

On August 17, 2021, Mayor Birney honored members of our community who have made significant contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Alexander Tsao

When he was sixteen, Alexander started Rocks2Dogs, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit business, and his mission was to find sustainable uses for discarded rock-climbing ropes. He started turning old, donated ropes into dog leashes, and during the coronavirus pandemic, he created a fundraiser with Rocks2Dogs, promoting that all sales would go towards food banks. Through interviews on KING 5, KOMO 4, and Q13 News, as well as being featured in The Washington Post, he has been able to reach customers around the country and raise close to \$40,000. Thank you, Alexander, for your remarkable work and generosity!



Vanesha and Varshini Hari

In 2016, Vanesha and started a nonprofit initiative called Joys of Giving. Their mission is to make a difference in their local community and around the globe by supporting educational equity and addressing gender disparity, especially in the STEM fields. Joys of Giving also includes a vision of fighting youth hunger, with a focus on food insecurity during COVID. Vanesha and Varshini organize fundraisers and volunteer their skills and time with outreach activities and workshops. So far, they have raised close to \$20,000, volunteered over 700 hours, served over 250 homeless shelter meals, and reached over 800 youth across the globe. They serve weekly meals to local youth homeless shelters, create curriculum to teach young kids technology and coding concepts, teach live baking and art projects, and most importantly combine their baking passion with annual fundraisers to help nonprofits around the globe. Thank you Vanesha and Varshini, for your work to support our local community and others worldwide.



Redmond School Break Food Box Program

Kristen Muscott, Karene Busby, Fran Wessling, Sandee Palmquist, and Linda Kaczmarek (not pictured) Judy Saunders, Joanne Hall.

In March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in many closures, the Redmond School Break Food Box Program filled the gaps for 155 Lake Washington School District families with school-aged children experiencing food insecurity. The team shifted from distributing supplemental food boxes on days during school breaks to contactless monthly delivery. Between March 12 and April 2, 2020, the leadership team launched a GoFundMe campaign, appealed to the community for financial support, created 35 delivery teams, and organized and executed two Food Box Distribution Days for triple the number of families. The program has supported families throughout the pandemic and is committed to continuing monthly deliveries during the nation's recovery, providing fresh produce and staples that can be customized to each

family's cultural preference, and offering nutrition, support, and consistency to families in this time of uncertainty and stress. Thank you to the Redmond School Break Food Box Program team for supporting so many families in our community!



Menka Soni

Menka Soni is the founder and president of the nonprofit organization AmPowering. Menka and her team are helping communities with food, masks, education for kids, interim shelters, rental, and utility assistance, and acting as advocates for mental health, diversity, inclusion, and equity. Her organization serves cooked meals to over 2,500 people every week and has helped over 300,000 people throughout the last year. Since the beginning of COVID, Menka has converted her home garage into food storage, and with the organization's pop-up mobile food bank, they are able to fill in gaps of food insecurity in our community and others in King County. Menka's work also benefitted many people in India when the country experienced a drastic increase in COVID cases. From helping financially to arranging oxygen, medicine, hospital beds, and food for hospital workers, Menka and her team worked nonstop to help COVID impacted families, vulnerable populations, homeless communities, those in dire living conditions, and so many others in need. Menka, thank you for your tireless efforts to serve so many communities during COVID.